

THESES OF PHD DISSERTATION

SUMMARY

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Poetics of Raskolnikov's Dreams Prior to the Murder in Dostoevsky's Novel *Crime and Punishment*



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General Introduction

1. The subject of the dissertation

The aim of the dissertation is a poetic analysis of Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov's dreams in Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*, and primarily those dreams will be examined which are taking shape in the protagonist's mind prior to the actual execution of the unexpected double murder. A newer, different approach to the work and the questions posed by the dissertation became feasible due to a spreading view in literary criticism, according to which Raskolnikov's dreams conceived in an upset state of mind, despite seemingly having no effect on the plot of the novel (cf. e.g. the murder is committed albeit Raskolnikov refuses this deed in his former visions), still give a fairly just picture of the development of the protagonist's fate.

Raskolnikov's "horse-dream" is subject to the most detailed examination in this dissertation. The choice of topic can be reasoned primarily by the fact that in *Crime and Punishment* the protagonist's vision, which has a great importance in depicting his fate and can be explained through poetic features, not only casts light on that Raskolnikov – wishing to change his poor living conditions – finalises his decision: the intent of murder, before committing it, but indicates the refusal of the plan, too. The special function of crisis-dream (a term by Mikhail Bakhtin), on the level of meaning, can be seen in an authentic depiction of the world of reality which points to a much wider world-interpretation opposed to the protagonist's theory even before committing the murder. Whereas here Raskolnikov finds a much clearer form of self expression than that represented by the language he uses for communication with other characters during the plot of the novel, it seems to be rational to analyse the multilayer figure of the protagonist – advancing towards committing the crime – through the unfolding of this dream.

The other analysis-block of this doctoral dissertation is the interpretation of Raskolnikov's newer vision following his horse-dream. This dream emerges in the protagonist's imagination distinctly before murdering Alyona Ivanovna and Lizaveta. As this short vision presents to us only the camel caravan resting in an African Egyptian oasis and the thirsty Raskolnikov's figure embraced by slim palm trees and a refreshing brook, but it becomes especially astonishing to see bloody

happenings and their brutally detailed depiction following this idyllic still-life. The dominating direction of the study related to this second dream is designated by the analysis results of the former horse-dream since the correlated meaning layers of the two dreams seen before the murder open a path to new possibilities to explain the protagonist's transformation. Hereby, we can approach the clarification of the main sphere of thoughts in Dostoevsky's work: interpreting the description of *committing the crime* and the *punishment* as a *violent* or a *voluntary sacrifice*. The other direction of the examination is appointed by the evaluation of certain compositional procedures. Within this framework we will cover the literary pretext - one from the horse-dream and one from the oasis-dream text - which can be explored at intertextual connection points, with the subject and action-motivation depicted in them. Knowing these - in the course of actions in *Crime and Punishment* - will also bring us closer to grabbing the poetic motive of the sudden turning point leading towards the killing.

2. Objectives of the dissertation

- to set a dream-typology concerning Dostoevsky's early and late works (the interpretation of the "crisis-dream")
- to map and unfold thematically the motif variants of *committing the crime* and its *punishment* related in the novel to the issues of the character, the subject, the composition, the narration and the language
- in connection to this, to explore Raskolnikov's action-motivation
- correlating the poetic meaning layers of these two dreams being the basis of the dissertation
- studying the protagonist's transformation through the examination of his dream sensations
- the analysis of pretexts belonging to the horse- and oasis-dream not having been examined before in literary criticism: N. A. Nekrasov's *About Weather* and M. Yu. Lermontov's *Three Palms* poems
- the interpretation of the "text-within-the text" composition as a general structural framework from the viewpoint of Raskolnikov's dreams touching upon the issues of "mise en abyme" - similarity - dialogicity
- to present the prevailing of folklore and mythological texts in Raskolnikov's horse-dream

- to reveal the external and internal intertextuality in Dostoevsky's works from the aspect of the relation of the following themes: "beating a plough-horse to death" - "murder" (Nekrasov's *About Weather* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*).

Approach and method

The physiological, psychological dream explications (see e.g.: S. Freud: *Die Traumdeutung* [*The Interpretation of Dreams*], C. G. Jung: *Gondolatok az álomról és az élményszerű gondolatokról* [*Thoughts on Dreams and Self-knowledge*], M. Jouve: *Le Paradoxe du sommeil* [*The Paradox of Sleep*, *The Story of Dreaming*], and also the mythological dream interpretations (see e.g. items in: S. A. Tokarev: *Мифы народов мира* [*The Myth of the Nations of the World*], Hoppál M. - Jankovics M. - Nagy A.: *Szemadám Gy.: Jellektár* [*Treasury of Allegories*], Pál J. - Ujvári E.: *Szimbolizmus* [*Treasury of Symbols*], H. Biedermann: *Szimbolizmuslexikon* [*Encyclopedia of Symbols*]) have a long past tradition which makes it possible to discuss in a wider perspective the poetic explanations of dreams appearing in the plot of Dostoevsky's examined novel. Among the monographs treating Dostoevsky's art or its literary historical background there are such widely known studies which present dream criticism from newer perspectives as compared to the viewpoints mentioned earlier. These include studies for instance by Pavel Florensky (on the symbol forming factors of dreams), Alfred Bern (on the psychological-poetical analysis of dreams in Dostoevsky's works), Vladimir Nikolajevich Toporov (on the mythological level of Raskolnikov's dreams), and Peeter Torop (interpretations of the protagonist's dreams from biblical-mythological-psychological aspects); or there are the investigations of Robert Louis Jackson in American critical literature (on the aesthetic functions of *work-of-art type* dreams in Dostoevsky's novels) and the studies of Michael R. Katz, Leonard J. Kent and Temira Pachmash which interpret Raskolnikov's dreams according to Freud's and Jung's dream-theory. Regarding the domain of this dissertation, the evaluation and mapping of this wider context is still merely supplementary but poetically it does not provide a basis for the analysis of Raskolnikov's aforementioned dreams and *Crime and Punishment* as a whole.

At the same time, we can find such monographs which embark on analysing the dreams depicted in Dostoevsky's novels distinctly with the purpose of pointing at meaning forming processes within each work. In the emergence of those processes the dream primarily does not operate as an act contributing to forming the protagonist's psychological character but rather as a text block mobilizing stylistic motifs (see e.g.: L. Grossmann's stylistic analysis of the chapter *At Tikhon's* in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*) or those of the *sjuzhet*, motifs relevant to the evolution of the overall artistic meaning constitution (cf. the notion of "the *sjuzhet* of awakening", elaborated in the works of Árpád Kovács; regarding the interpretations of Raskolnikov's concrete visions see the research of A. N. Geshajic, T. A. Knezakina, Katalin Kroc, J. T. Shaw, V. E. Velovskaya).

In this dissertation beside our aim to fit the protagonist's visions into the different interpretational traditions of literary criticism, we primarily aspire to throw light upon the peculiarity behind the unique compositional structure in *Crime and Punishment* which covers the formulation of the plot ranging from *preparing the crime* to the detailed depiction of *punishment*. Behind this an important poetical rule can be sensed, namely that certain descriptions and the main topic of research, i.e. Raskolnikov's dreams give representations developing into a sequence by being joined together. What it results, is the generation of a different story which deviates from the plot of the novel and defines the protagonist's search for a way out and his resurrection. In the dreams depicting the re-structuring of Raskolnikov's personality and vocalizing the re-organisation of the protagonist's different character variants, the main motifs are *committing the crime* and *punishment* and also their variations which turn into themes at different levels of the novel. Thus, according to the hopefully new achievements represented by our investigations of Raskolnikov's dreams, we endeavour to illuminate how these themes refer to issues of the character, the *sjuzhet*, the composition, the narration, the language and evoke certain questions regarding the mediation between genres (see also intertextuality).

The critical foundation and circumscription of dream interpretation methods applied in this dissertation are not simply and primarily realized by taking into consideration of the aforementioned (inter)disciplinary aspects (see: e.g. the physiological, psychological, philosophical ramifications). We expose a poetic set of questions within which we try to separate isoblic directions. The following theoretical aspects belong here: *the synagmatic and paradigmatic order* of

composition in Crime and Punishment (cf. involving Yuri Lotman's, Wolf Schmid's, Vladimir Toporov's theory); the *counterpart/double-character scheme developed in the novel* (cf. e.g.: Mikhail Bakhtin's, Yuri Lotman's, Peter Topor's related concepts); the *mise en abyme* – *reduced scale-model* – *structure* (see the theoretical implications in the works of Lucien Dällenbach, Yuri Lotman); the *dialogicity* (see e.g. Mikhail Bakhtin's model) and the *intertextuality* (see: R. G. Nazrov's particular text interpretations). As concerning both, the horse-dream with its Nekrasovian textual background and then the oasis-dream inspired by Lermontov, the problematization of intertextuality seems self-evidently to be unavoidable, in order to treat this problem in more detail we set dreams into such interpretational contexts which embrace the evaluation of folklore-connotations and the different perspectives of the mythopoetic approach (see e.g. references, as a consequence of the investigation of intertextuality in our dissertation, to the works of Vilmos Döszegi, Mirena Eliade, Vladimir Propp, Roger B. Anderson), and also give the possibilities of referring certain structural poetic approaches to the composition of *Crime and Punishment*, such as the afore-defined theoretical details provided in the theoretical models worked out by Yuri Lotman or Wolf Schmid. Similarly, particular works belonging to a wider range of international critical literature with non-Russian literary orientation are also involved in the explanation of the foregoing fields (cf. e.g.: Lucien Dällenbach). Apparently, none of these theoretical aspects can be connected specifically or solely – according to a given critical canon – with the interpretation of the Dostoevskian dream depictions and cannot be linked necessarily to the interpretational traditions explaining literary forms of the dream descriptions.

The result of this – so to say – peculiar research method is that in our dissertation we choose to explicate and ponder further on the crisis-dream theory from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept as a condition of the initial interpretational frame of the investigation of the horse- and oasis-dreams. The reason for this is that this formulation of an element of a dream-typology through wich Dostoevsky's novels can be better characterized combines genre-poetical, narrative, narrowly meant semantic, intertextual interpretational components, and also philosophical, psychological ones related to the above mentioned poetic issues, with mythopoetic (cf. carnivalisation, folklore) interpretational components which are emphasized in an individual chapter of our dissertation. In this sense we consider Bakhtin's crisis-dream theory to be of a synthesizing character in a wider context of the scientific

history of literature. The examination of this theory of crisis-dreams seems to be significant for us, from the other side, because the explanation of the protagonist's dream, connected to the genre of the metanep, links the issues of dreams to poetics, the sphere of critical investigations the dissertation is devoted to. We are also given through this model an examination guide which interconnects the microcomponents (protagonist) with the macrocomponents (sujetist) of the novel, and in a wider sense, it also connects this latter one to the question of the whole text arrangement (the genre of the novel). For us it is directive because we consider that the language of the dreamer, the language of the dream and also that of the novel are poetic layers projected on each other in the textual world of *Crime and Punishment*. Therefore, we strive to involve the question areas of the protagonist's dreams and visions into the range of issues concerning the whole composition of the novel.

The results of the dissertation

Summing up the various theoretical, methodological and interpretational aspects defined above, we may state that the interpretation elaborated in this doctoral dissertation accentuates, among others, that the two dreams preceding Raskolnikov's murder in *Crime and Punishment* function similarly in the structure of the novel. In the decompound structure of the integrating/integrated (embedding-embedded) texts and as intertextual poetic materials both are meant to build such motif paradigms which string syntagmatically the individual phases of the course of transformation (cp. *crime and punishment*) that portrays Raskolnikov's thoughts and dynamic development.

These structures provide ways of continual reflections and references for the inner components of the text which make it possible to trace in the novel both the explication of the sequence of events related to the protagonists and the semantic paradigms engendered within poetic text formation processes which are examined in this dissertation as modes of *sujetist*-development. For this purpose we unite issues of the "text-within-the text", the "mise en abyme" (or reduced scale-model)-structure and intertextuality with the exploring of paradigmatical and syntagmatic text-building composition. Moving on such a theoretical-methodological background we are given an opportunity to interpret Raskolnikov's dreams (in the first place the horse-dream and then the ouis-dream) in an intertextual poetic

context of dream description elaborated in *Crime and Punishment* which include mythologic and folklore texts inasmuch as they are referred to significant internal intertextual materials within the Dostoevskian oeuvre itself. As a consequence of this examination, we believe to reveal in Raskolnikov's figure such a poetic manner of modelling which simultaneously associates him, as the main character of the examined work, with quite a few other Dostoevsky protagonists but still makes him unique, individual. The main character of *Crime and Punishment*, incorporated into rich cultural and literary traditions in the process of its formulation, turns into such a protagonist whose personality development has a really unique, personal path among others due to the specific means of the dream-poetics evolving in the novel.

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